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THE IDEAL JEWISH PASTOR:

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE,

ON JUNE 23RD, 5651—1891,

On the Occasion of his Installation,

BY THE

REV. DR. HERMANN ADLER,

CHIEF RABBI OF THE UNITED HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

PRINTED BY REQUEST.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY WERTHEIMER, LEA AND CO.,
CIRCUS PLACE, LONDON WALL.

1891.

*With the author's
kind regards.*

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Dedicatory.



TO MY BRETHREN IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE

I DEDICATE THIS INAUGURAL SERMON.

IN a letter of congratulation addressed to me by the great historian of our race, he writes in words which should fill us with deep thankfulness and high resolve: "The Jews of England are designated by Providence to stand in the van of Jewdom, כי אנשי מופת הם, 'for they are men of mark.' May you succeed in lifting them to the highest degree of ideality." It is my earnest hope that the following pages, however feeble and imperfect they are, may contribute, at least in some little measure, to the achievement of so exalted an aim!

H. A.

THE IDEAL JEWISH PASTOR.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

It is just forty-six years ago since I sat in yonder gallery, nestling close to my dear mother, gazing with childish wonderment on the strange ceremonial that was being enacted below—the installation of a new Chief Rabbi. I then comprehended but little of the discourse that was preached on that occasion; but since that time I have often read and re-read the words that were spoken by my beloved father and revered predecessor, זצ"ל/חה. He dilated on the feelings of diffidence and trepidation with which he entered upon his office, being a stranger in a foreign land, the language of which he, as yet, but imperfectly understood, and placed amid surroundings that were altogether novel to him. There are, I believe, several here to-day who can recall the fervour with which he implored Divine help and blessing—a help and a blessing which were indeed so signally manifested to him from the moment that he set foot on these shores to the time when his soul returned to its heavenly home, בקדשה ובטהרה, sacred and pure.

My position is of an essentially different character. I have grown up in your midst. I have endeavoured

to draw my mental nurture from the rich stores of our dear England's thought and learning. In my paternal home, as a disciple and student, and subsequently, during a decade of gradually increasing responsibilities, every detail has become familiar to me of the exalted office which I have been called upon, by the Providence of God and the voice of the community, to occupy. I am standing in the presence of friends. Many of you are knitted to my soul. We take sweet counsel together. Your loyal friendship has proved a stay, a solace, and a delight. And yet I must aver that I am inspired by sentiments of anxiety and misgiving not less keen and poignant than those which thrilled the heart of our late Chief Rabbi. And you can, all of you, appreciate, even as I hope you will all fully sympathise with the motives and causes which prompt those anxieties and suggest those misgivings.

May I not well stand appalled at the responsibility cast upon me, to direct the religious government of the many English communities scattered over every part of the globe, extending even beyond the British Empire? How greatly has the Hebrew population of the United Kingdom expanded within the last half-century; it has been trebled, if not quadrupled. Take only the metropolis. It is no longer a city, but a province, with its synagogues from Hampstead, in the north, to Lewisham, in the south; from Hammersmith, in the west, to Stepney—and soon, I trust to Poplar—in the east. And how great an increase

has there been in the number of our institutions, both educational and benevolent, each of them needing some supervision, and making some rightful claim on the Chief Rabbi's time and thought! And how heterogeneous are the elements of this population, widely differing in their culture, ranging between the two extremes of the religious thermometer, its boiling and its freezing point, each section needing a different kind of handling. Verily, as I think of the multitudinous duties and responsibilities that await me; as I reflect on the grave problems by which I am confronted; aye, and as I hear of all that I am expected to achieve, I ask, with Job,* **אִם כֹּחַ : אֲבָנִים כֹּחַ אִם בְּשָׁרִי כֹחַ :** "Is my strength the strength of stones, or is my flesh of brass?"

Dear Congregants, If I were to depend on my own unassisted powers I should indeed be tempted to despair. But I rely with trustful confidence upon the help and guidance of my God and the God of my fathers, God, my exceeding joy, who has brought me thus far, and whose blessing you have this day invoked on my behalf; and my soul is no longer cast down nor disquieted within me. And I crave the affectionate forbearance of the members of my flock, that they may not expect more of me than can be planned by one poor human brain; that they may not demand of me more than can be wrought by two weak human hands. But I also feel upheld—I say it with deep humility—by the

* Job vi. 12.

all-absorbing desire which God has implanted in me since my earliest years, and which my parents fostered within me since ever I drew conscious breath, the aspiration to become a worthy teacher in Israel, the yearning to spend myself for the glory of Judaism, and the welfare of its professors, and the good of all my fellow-creatures.

It has been truly said that the worth of a man in relation to his fellows depends upon the ideals which he cherishes. Let me then point out to you what I have conceived to be the ideal of a Jewish pastor, which I shall strive to follow, though I can never hope to attain it. This ideal, it seems to me, is set forth in a few words written in Exodus, chapter xxviii. verse 30 :

וְנָשָׂא אֶהֱרֹן אֶת-מִשְׁפַּט בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל לִבּוֹ לִפְנֵי
יְיָ תָמִיד :

"AND AARON SHALL BEAR THE CAUSE OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL UPON HIS HEART BEFORE THE LORD CONTINUALLY."

These words, in their literal sense, refer to the Urim and Thummim which the High Priest was to bear on his breast, and which, according to traditional interpretation,* would seem to have been none other than the precious gems on which the names of the

* Joma, p. 73b., אומר מצטרפות ר"ל אמר בולטות ר"ל אומר מצטרפות

twelve tribes of Israel were engraven. These he should bear on his heart, which, in Scripture parlance denotes the centre and source of all intellectual and emotional life. "He shall bear the names of the children of Israel upon his heart for a memorial before the Lord continually," ever mindful that the interests, not of any one powerful and influential section, but of the whole house of Israel, have been entrusted to his keeping. And if his brain and heart would thus be entirely engrossed by solicitude for the well-being of his people, if all disturbing elements—selfishness, prejudice and the fear of man had been banished from his soul, then God would vouchsafe to him His clear and perfect guidance,* and he would be worthy to lead and to counsel Israel in every season of difficulty and perplexity.

Dear Brethren, There are many essential differences between the functions of the High Priest of old and the duties incumbent upon the Jewish Pastor of our time. But it appears to me that the obligation is as imperative on the present-day religious guide as it ever was on the *כהן הגדול* the High Pontiff that "*he shall bear the cause of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually.*" He must ever meditate on the needs of his community, sensitive to all that will redound to Israel's shame or Israel's honour. But he must not judge of events and decide upon his course of action with the assumption of sacerdotal infallibility. He must humbly bring the

* Ibid. אורים שמאירין את דבריהם תומים שמשלימים את דבריהן

cause before God, before Him who is the fountain of wisdom ; so that, striving for the divine light, he will not be wise in his own conceit. Before Him who is the Sun of righteousness ; so that, despising the soft flatteries of an easy popularity, he will consider not what will be the easiest and pleasantest policy, but what line of action will stand the scrutiny of Heaven. Before Him, who is the God of mercy and loving-kindness, so that the poor and the oppressed will confidently look to him for help and for defence. Before Him who worketh great things, so that he will not fold his hands in idleness, but will be for ever striving and toiling, acknowledging no master above him, save the Lord his God.* **שׂאִין עַל גְּבוֹי אֱלֹהֵי ה'** **אלהיו** * "Before the Lord continually." Ready to sacrifice his ease without murmuring and to surrender his leisure without questioning, impressed with the force of the words spoken by an ancient sage : † **נְתַמְנָה אָדָם** † **בראש ונמל טלית לא יאמר לטובתי אני נזקק לא איכפת** **לי בצבור אלא כל טורח הצבור עליו :** "When once a man has been placed at the head of affairs, and has been vested with the robe of office, he dare never more say, 'Let me now have a care for my comfort ; why need I concern myself for the affairs of others ?' Ah no ; all the needs of the community henceforth devolve upon him."

Momentous and paramount as are the spiritual interests of his flock, he will not confine his activity to these, but devote much anxious thought to their

* Horajoth, p. 11a, b.

† Shemoth Rabbah, c. 27.

temporal condition. His sympathies and his energies will not be pent up within the narrow limits of his own pastorate, but will extend far beyond to the lot of his brethren in countries afar off—sympathies and energies never more urgently needed than in these troublous times, when the hydra of intolerance and persecution, alas! again lifts up its hateful head. Imbued as he is with a fervent love for his country, he will work with gladsome energy in every cause that can tend to add to his country's welfare, and alleviate the miseries of his fellow-men. And thus he will prove himself the rightful successor, not merely of those pious men who guided our community from the days of Menasseh ben Israel, but likewise of those who lived before the expulsion; of men like Rabbenu Yom Tob, the martyr hero of York Castle,* of Jacob, Presbyter of the Jews of all England, whom King John termed *dilectus et familiaris noster*, our well-beloved and intimate friend;† of R. Elias, named Elyas le Evesk by the chroniclers, who lifted up his voice in solemn protest against the spoliation of the third Henry.

* Named הקדוש in Tosafoth Joma, p. 48a, ר"ה מי יליף, and in all probability the author of the penitential hymn, אמן כן, sung on the eve of the Day of Atonement, as appears from the introductory line which is preserved in several manuscripts, יום יום ידרושון לך טוב למעון יחי עוז מלולך כלחתי: See Zunz, "Literaturgeschichte der Synagogalen Poesie," pp. 286, 287, and Grätz, "Geschichte der Juden," vol. vi., note 9, and Joseph Jacobs' forthcoming "Jews of England under the Norman and Angevin Kings," pp. 109—111.

† Prynne's "Demurrer," Part II., p. 5.

But it is to the spiritual claims of his flock that the ideal pastor will devote his chief solicitude. He will watch over God's house, imbued with the anxious desire that the divine service held within its walls shall enable the worshipper to realise the lofty ends to which his communion with his Father in heaven shall serve,—to purify, to consecrate and to elevate to a higher plane his life outside the synagogue. He will therefore strive that every service be characterised by dignity and reverence, by fervour and devotion. His voice will be heard when he has entered the Sanctuary, awakening the careless, and stirring up the slothful, seeking to kindle in his hearers' hearts the enthusiasm that stirs and quickens his own soul. He will unfold to them the high significance and spiritual purpose of the statutes and ordinances of his faith, the observance of which he has been appointed vigilantly to safeguard and jealously to defend, as heirlooms to be faithfully transmitted from generation to generation. And he will teach that a mere blind and mechanical fulfilment of these ordinances will not be acceptable in the eyes of the Supreme, unless they serve as a stimulus to the higher life—a life of self-control and abstinence, a life of uprightness and of integrity.

It is the cause of the *children* of Israel which he will most earnestly bear in his heart, eagerly solicitous that *they* may be won for God and His Law. To attain this end he will watch over the schools that

they may ever remain nurseries of genuine piety and sterling virtue. Nor in his care for the children of the poor will he be unmindful of the sons and daughters of the leisured classes, who stand in need, not less, but rather more urgently of the wise and wholesome restraints of religion. His care will not be confined to the young during the brief period of schooling. He will watch over the pupils at that critical period when they are launched upon the world with all its lures and enticements, endeavouring still to instruct, to guide and to mould. Not by vague exhortations, but by seeking to influence each individual that comes under his ken. For the counsel of the wise king will powerfully come home to him* : יָדַע הַמֶּלֶךְ כָּנִי צִאֲנָהּ שִׁיר לִבָּהּ לַעֲדָרִים : "Be thou diligent to know the faces of thy lambs : set thy heart to the flocks."

He will rally around him the poor and uncultured, sympathising with them in their struggles, mitigating their troubles, and advising them in their perplexities. Nor will he hold aloof from those who are accounted the spoilt children of fortune, but seek to shame them out of their wasteful luxury and hard selfishness. He will essay to win back to the fold those on whom their Judaism sits but lightly, by holding up our faith in its real garb, and showing how its teachings are in harmony with all that is good and noble and true in modern thought.

And thus in accordance with the Scripture texts

* Proverbs xxvii. 23.

we heard just now, he will be at one and the same time a shepherd and a watchman. A shepherd who *goes out before* his flock ; a leader, not one who allows himself to be swayed by every passing wind of doctrine ; a man of tender heart, who guides his sheep to green pastures and cooling streams, carrying the young, the weary and the footsore in his arms. And a watchman, a sentinel standing on the lofty tower, patrolling the battlements, ever alert with eye and ear, a vigilant guardian of the citadel of religion and morality against the surprise of every foe ; a doughty champion of the mission Israel has still to accomplish on earth—to spread the knowledge of the unity of God, the supremacy of virtue and the brotherhood of man.

This, in the fewest possible words, is the ideal of the true Jewish pastor which I have set before me. In how far shall I be able to realise it? I answer in the prophet's words* : **וַיֵּאמְרוּ אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה יָדָעָתָּ** : "O Lord God, Thou knowest." It is not in the power of poor humanity to realise its high ideals.

On the earth the broken arcs ;
In the heaven a perfect round.

But of this I am assured, that if I but aspire to the highest, God in His mercy will account the pure intent as though it had been fully achieved †
מַחֲשַׁבָּה טוֹבָה הַקִּבֵּל מִצְרָפָה לַמַּעֲשֶׂה.

* Ezekiel xxxvii. 3.

† Kiddushin, p. 40a.

But who would gainsay the fact that the task which awaits me is, in sooth, gigantic? I speak not as one who is ignorant of the work that confronts him. During the last twelve years I have learnt what the English Rabbinate means, what it entails and what it requires. How fully applicable to it are the words of R. Gamaliel * : לכם ששררה אני נותן לכם כמדומין אתם ששררה אני נותן לכם : “Think you that I commit governance unto you ; ah, no ! I give servitude unto you.” Not that I dread work. From my earliest years I have bowed my shoulder to bear. To the community I have given the vigour of my youth and the strength of my manhood. For the community I will live ; for the community I will die. But do not exact too much from me. Do not entirely deprive me of a few interspaces consecrated to those studies which are the rejoicing of my heart. Do not expect me to be continually in evidence. The Chief Rabbi’s office is not the stage of a theatre ; the sphere of a pastor’s work is not the arena of a circus. And even in those callings he is not the best actor who plays to the galleries.

I can but re-echo the words spoken by him who will ever remain the highest ideal of a nation’s guide :

לֹא אוּכַל אֲנִי לְבַדִּי לְשֹׂאת אֶת כָּל הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי כְבֵד מִמֶּנִּי :
 “I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.” † And, therefore, I am fully confident that I shall not succeed in accomplishing

* Horajoth, p. 10, a, b.

† Numbers xi. 14.

aught of sterling value, unless you will, all of you, extend to me your right loyal aid. Dear ministers and fellow-workers! Second me in all these various labours, which I have imperfectly sketched, with your deliberate counsel and your willing help. Let me feel that I have in every one of you a zealous coadjutor who will devote heart and soul to the work demanded of him! I ask every individual member of the community to extend his loyal help to me. Let me feel that every hand I grasp is that of a true friend! Give me your loyal help, Members of my flock in the provinces, whose representatives I rejoice to welcome here to-day, and whom I hope soon to visit in your homes! Give me your loyal help, Brethren across the seas! Though my voice cannot reach you, yet will my written word, my counsel and my guidance, ever be freely given to you. And oh! that a dear wish of my heart may be fulfilled to me ere I pass away, to behold with my eyes the various colonial communities that are so often in my thoughts, so constantly in my prayers.

Give me your confidence, I exclaim to the various sections of the community, with their many divergent opinions. That such diversities exist it would be but foolish and ostrich-like to deny. But I would entreat them to deal with a forbearing spirit toward each other, devoid of suspicion, devoid of distrust. To my brethren in the West I say, Do not stigmatise the denizens of the East as bigoted fanatics, lost in the slough of mediæval superstition. Granted

that they may be inferior in refinement and culture to their wealthier brethren, yet do they not teach many a precious lesson of staunch, manly religious allegiance and of glad willingness to make heavy sacrifices for the sake of their faith? To my brethren in the East, I say (though, happily, the East cannot claim a monopoly in the possession of strictly observant Israelites), Do not look upon those who are not in entire agreement with you as though they were outside the pale of Judaism. Give them credit for being as solicitous as you are yourselves for the welfare of our common faith. And to both East and West I appeal, Let not your divergence of opinion lead to schisms and divisions, to discord and disruption. May the union of hearts continue and strengthen! At no crisis in the annals of our race was it more necessary than it is now to present a united front to the world. And confide in me that my most earnest strivings will be directed to secure this end. **הַאֱמֶת וְהַשָּׁלוֹם**, "Truth and peace" are the aims for which I will toil. For gratitude I ask not. From the noble it comes spontaneously; from the ignoble it never comes at all. But for this I do ask and entreat you all, Give me your loyal trust! Give me your prayers! Let me feel that your supplications are joined to mine in this most solemn hour!

ALMIGHTY FATHER! The first prayer that ascends unto Thee from this pulpit, which we consecrate this

day to Thy holy service, is for our beloved Queen, her royal house, and our dear land. Even as Thou hast been with our Sovereign throughout her life, so do Thou still protect and shield her. As her years advance may health and strength not fail her. Grant prosperity to her Empire. To her legislators and counsellors vouchsafe insight and faithfulness.

We pray unto Thee on behalf of Israel. Spare, we beseech Thee, the remnant of Thy people that dwells in the land of the North, that is so sadly peeled and trodden down. Incline Thou the heart of its ruler to deal with our brethren in mercy and justice.

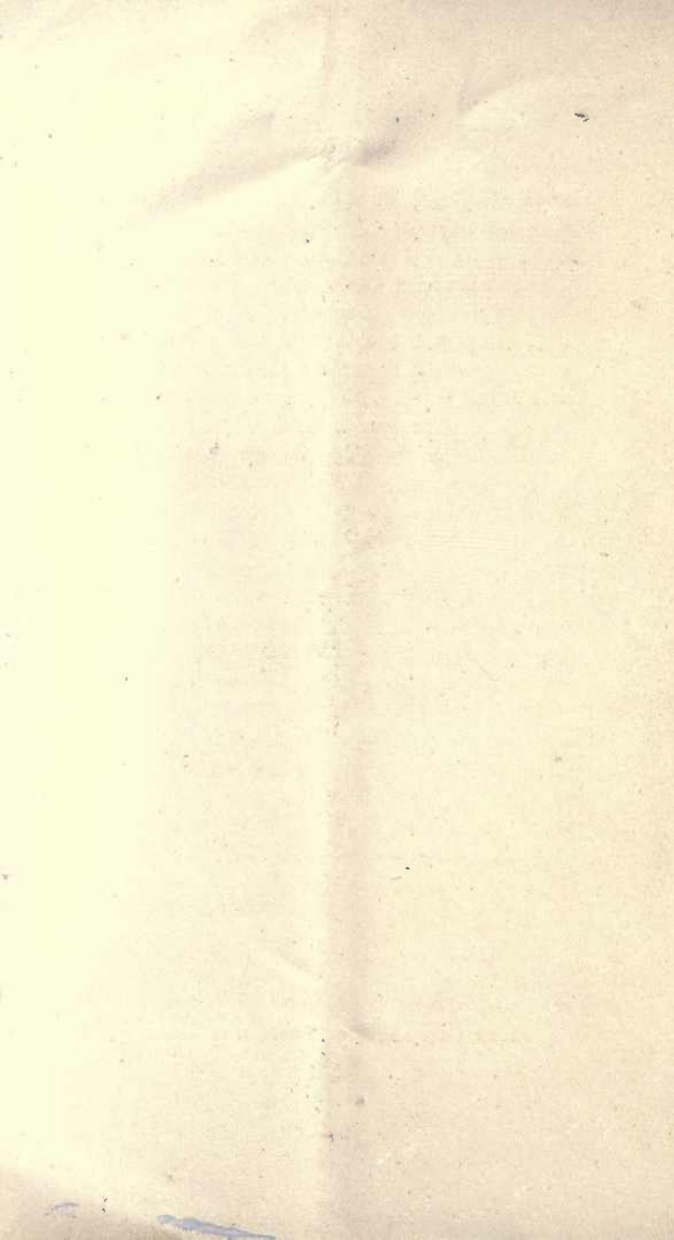
And I raise my eyes to Thee and supplicate Thee for my poor self. Thou hast promised* וְנִתְּנִי לָכֶם רֹעִים כְּלִבִּי וְרָעִי אֶתְכֶם דָּעָה וְחֻשְׁבִּיל, that Thou wilt give unto Thy people pastors according to Thine heart. Help Thou me to become such a pastor according to Thy heart, who will feed his flock with knowledge and with understanding. Thou knowest my innermost thoughts. Thou knowest how ardently there burns within me the desire to sanctify Thy name and to glorify the faith Thou didst reveal unto us. Send me Thy light and Thy truth, that I may worthily accomplish this mission. Fortify me, I beseech Thee, so that I may be able to bear the heavy burden committed to my charge. Strengthen the tottering knees ; uphold the weak hands.

Pour out the riches of Thy heavenly grace upon our ministers and teachers, and upon all who maintain our

* Jeremiah iii. 15.

synagogues, our schools and our charities. Do Thou fulfil the blessing which I invoke this day not only on Thy children who stand here before Thee, but upon all, near and far, for whose spiritual welfare I am from this day forth responsible.

THE LORD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU. THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON YOU AND BE GRACIOUS UNTO YOU. THE LORD TURN HIS FACE UNTO YOU, AND GIVE YOU PEACE. AMEN. AMEN.





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